

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE FIRST
AFRICA-EUROPE SUMMIT, UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE
OAU AND EU, CAIRO, 3-4 APRIL, 2000**

Introduction

The initiative to organise an Africa-Europe Summit was taken by Portugal and endorsed by the European Union in 1996. In a formal communication to the OAU, on proposals for the Summit, the position of the EU was that the Summit should only discuss political issues, such as democratisation, human rights, conflict prevention, good governance, etc. The position of the OAU was that a Summit of such a nature should not be limited on the issues to be discussed, and that for Africa, there should be a special focus on economic and development issues, including particularly, the external debt problem of African countries.

2. In its review of the proposed Summit and all the issues surrounding it, the Ouagadougou Summit of the OAU/AEC of July, 1998, decided, inter-alia, to accept, in principle, the proposed OAU-EU Summit, and stated that the Summit which should not be a one-off event, should discuss not only political issues, but economic issues as well, and that concrete actions should be taken in respect of those issues, with a follow-up mechanism to monitor the implementation. The Ouagadougou decision, therefore, constituted the mandate of the OAU for discussing, with the European side, all the modalities and issues relating to the Summit.

The Preparatory Process

3. The preparatory process for the Summit was launched with the exchange of communications between the OAU and EU, reflecting their respective positions on the issues to be tackled at the Summit. Difficulties were encountered with regard to the agenda items, the name of the Summit, criteria for participation, follow-up mechanism, and periodicity of the Summit. As these difficulties could not be resolved, no substantive preparations could be pursued. However, an OAU Preparatory Committee was set up for co-ordinating OAU's preparation for the Summit.

4. During the Algiers Summit, in July, 1999, and after reviewing all the reports submitted to it, a decision was taken to entrust, to a Core-Group of the OAU Preparatory Committee, the task of re-establishing contact with the EU side, with a view to ensuring that all obstacles will be cleared, in order for the Summit to take place. With this general mandate, therefore,

the OAU side was able to negotiate with the EU all the outstanding issues relating to the Summit.

5. On the whole, six Preparatory Meetings were held between the OAU Core Group and the EU Troika, as follows:

- (a) The first Preparatory Meeting – Helsinki, September, 1999;
- (b) The Second Preparatory Meeting – Algiers, November, 1999;
- (c) The Third Preparatory Meeting – Brussels, January, 2000;
- (d) The Fourth Preparatory Meeting – Pretoria, February, 2000;
- (e) The Fifth Preparatory Meeting – Cairo, March, 2000;
- (f) The Sixth Preparatory Meeting – Lisbon, March, 2000.

6. It was at the Second Preparatory Meeting in Algiers that the OAU and EU sides agreed on the agenda of the Summit, that covered economic, political, social and development issues. There was also the agreement that the Summit would adopt a declaration and plan of action. With regard to participation in the Summit, however, the EU insisted that only internationally recognised States, Members of the UN, should participate, including Morocco. While the OAU side had no objection to Morocco's participation, its position was strong on the participation of all OAU Member States, failing which, then the OAU would not be a part of the preparatory process.

7. Regarding the periodicity of the Summit, all that the EU could offer was that the Summit was a process, rather than a one-off event, while on follow-up mechanism, it maintained that the Summit Plan of Action would cover the OAU concern on the matter. Another issue that could not be resolved was the Name of the Summit; whether OAU-EU, as the OAU had insisted, arising from the Ouagadougou mandate; or EU-Africa as proposed by the EU.

8. It should be stated that difficulties, particularly with regard to the Name of the Summit and the criteria of participation, persisted until the 4th Preparatory Meeting. In between the 3rd and 4th Preparatory Meetings, however, the OAU was informed formally of the sovereign decision of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic to withdraw its right as an OAU Member State to participate in the Summit, which thus, facilitated the organisation of the Summit. Secondly, as a means of facilitating the preparatory process, a special consultative meeting was convened in Algiers on February 9, 2000, by the OAU Current Chairman, on the initiative of the Portuguese Prime Minister, involving the participation of the Foreign Ministers of Portugal and Egypt, as well as the Secretary General High Representative of the EU Council, and the OAU Assistant Secretary General. The meeting was specifically to deal with the issues of

the Name of the Summit, Periodicity and Follow-up Mechanism. The success of this Algiers Consultative Meeting, thus, paved the way for the 4th, 5th and 6th Preparatory Meetings.

9. At the 4th Preparatory Meeting, however, it became clear that the two sides had different understanding of the agreement arrived at in Algiers. While the OAU's understanding was that the Name of the Summit would be Africa-Europe Summit organised by the EU and the OAU, the EU's position was that the Name was Euro-Africa Summit under the auspices of the OAU and EU.

10. Regarding Periodicity, the OAU's understanding, on the other hand, was that the Summit would meet at a three-yearly interval, with meetings of Foreign Ministers in between the sessions of the Summit; the EU understanding was that the concept of continuity of the Summit was accepted, by which it would announce the date and venue of the Second Summit, during the Summit in Cairo.

11. On the Follow-up Mechanism, the OAU's understanding was that there would be meetings of Foreign Ministers in between the sessions of the Summit, as well as meetings of Senior Officials, as and when required. The EU only referred to meetings of Senior Officials.

12. With such wide differences in positions, the Pretoria meeting adjourned inconclusively with the understanding that the Foreign Ministers of Algeria and Portugal would re-examine the issues. This was done, and the 5th and 6th Preparatory Meetings were organised successfully.

13. The major focus of the 6th Preparatory Meeting was the preparation of the draft Cairo Declaration and Plan of Action, based on the draft documents submitted by the two sides. The Lisbon Meeting was able to agree, ad referendum, to the texts of both the draft Declaration and Plan of Action, with certain important issues left for further consultation on the eve of the Cairo Summit.

14. It should be stressed that for the EU side, the existence of the ACP-EU new Partnership Agreement, the Barcelona Process, for some countries in North Africa, and the Trade and Development Co-operation Agreement, with South Africa, were sufficient to take care of all economic and related concerns of Africa. The OAU rejected such a strategy which would further divide Africa, indeed undermine the OAU's efforts at continental integration, and reminded the EU side that the initiative for the Summit was taken in spite of the existence of these agreements. Finally, the OAU position prevailed.

The Summit

15. The First Africa-EU Summit was held at the Cairo International Centre under the Co-Chairmanship of the OAU Current Chairman, H.E. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and the EU Presidency, Prime Minister António Guterres of Portugal. The Summit was preceded by a meeting of all OAU Member States at both expert and ministerial level, on April 1st and by a Meeting of Africa and EU Foreign Ministers on April 2, 2000. The opening ceremony consisted of a welcome statement by the Host President, His Excellency, President Hosny Mubarak of Egypt, the statement by the OAU Current Chairman, His Excellency, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the statement by the EU Presidency, His Excellency, Prime Minister António Guterres of Portugal, the statement by the OAU Secretary General, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, and the statement by the Secretary General of the European Union/High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Mr. Solana.

16. All the statements emphasised the significance of the occasion, the expectations from the peoples of the two continents, the issues of priority to the two sides, as well as the need to ensure that whatever would be adopted in the Plan of Action would be effectively implemented. Among the issues articulated with a high degree of cohesion by OAU Heads of State and Government were those of fundamental importance to the continent, namely: the heavy external debt, access to markets, resource flows, in particular Official Development Assistance and Foreign Direct Investment, restitution of cultural goods and illegally acquired public funds to their countries of origin. Equally of importance was the discussion about democracy and human rights in the continent which generated a lively and healthy debate at the Summit.

17. The major outcome of the Summit was the adoption of the Cairo Declaration and Plan of Action. While the Declaration focused on the major principles and objectives underlying co-operation between Africa and Europe, in striving for a dynamic partnership, the Plan of Action has embodied, in general and specific terms, agreement on actions to be undertaken in the economic, social, development and political domains by the two sides. In addition, the Plan of Action embodies a Follow-up Mechanism in the form of a Bi-Regional Group, as well as a decision that the second Summit would take place in the year 2003 at a venue to be announced later. The Cairo Declaration and Plan of Action are attached as Annexes to this report.

18. Among the major decisions of the Summit were:
- (a) that the Bi-Regional Group would meet to examine the Africa's external debt problem and submit a report, if necessary, to a meeting of Ministers. This would be the first time that Africa's debt problem would be examined in such a multilateral group rather than on a case-by-case basis, as the creditors countries have always insisted;
 - (b) that the Bi-Regional Group would also examine the issue of the return and restitution of cultural and historical artefacts and monuments, etc.;
 - (c) that illegally acquired public funds, which are lodged in Banks overseas, would be investigated and returned to the countries of origin;
 - (d) Specific agreements were also reached on the strengthening and building up the private sector in Africa, in relation to the effort to increase the flows of foreign investment into the continent. The agreement included a decision to organise fora and the setting up of EU-Investment and Technology Centres in Africa.

Recommendations

19. That Commission should commend the Lomé Summit to:
- 1. **EXPRESS SPECIAL APPRECIATION** to President Boufelflika of Algeria and President Hosny Mubarak for the efforts they deployed in ensuring the holding and success of the First Africa-Europe Summit;
 - 2. **COMMEND** the OAU Preparatory Committee and its Core Group for the maintenance of OAU solidarity and steadfastness in defending the position of the OAU during the negotiations
 - 3. **CALL ON** Member States to attach high priority to the implementation of the Cairo Plan of Action;
 - 4. **REQUEST** the General Secretariat, with the co-operation of the RECs, to prepare, on the basis of priority issues in the Cairo Plan of Action, a programme for the implementation of the Plan of Action, and report progress on these to the Council.

2000

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